

the inquiry may start in a structured way with the teacher choosing the focus (at the Tuning In phase), the students may choose their own questions and the teacher may organise an excursion for everyone but allow students to represent their findings in any way they like (in the Finding Out and Sorting Out phase) – and in the final stage, individuals and groups could choose their audience and their preferred way to reflect and act on their findings (the Reflection and Action phase).

TABLE 1: The decision making continuum

	Decision Making Responsibilities	Tuning In	Finding Out and Sorting Out	Reflection and Action
<div> <div>Most structured inquiry</div> <div>↑</div> <div>Least structured inquiry</div> <div>↓</div> </div>	Teacher selection and organisation	<p>The teacher provides the focus and key questions for investigation.</p> <p>Students work on shared experiences as a whole class or the teacher groups the students as required.</p>	<p>The teacher provides the resources and/or organises the Finding Out experiences which are conducted together as a class.</p> <p>The teacher decides how data will be sorted out.</p>	<p>The teacher provides structures and requirements for reflection and chooses an action or actions that students implement.</p>
	Student and teacher negotiated	<p>The teacher decides the focus of unit and key questions – or they may be negotiated with students (as a class, in groups or individually).</p> <p>The teacher might negotiate the composition of the groups and the tasks to be completed.</p>	<p>The teacher discusses the possibilities for ways to find out information. These can be conducted together as a whole class or different students may use different sources of information.</p> <p>The teacher might provide choices about ways that data can be sorted.</p>	<p>The teacher might provide options for reflecting and pose possibilities for action. Students add their suggestions to the list of possibilities.</p>
	Student choice	<p>The students decide on the focus of the inquiry and the key questions for investigation. These are based on the students' interests.</p> <p>The students decide if they want to work individually or in teams.</p>	<p>Students might use different sources of data when Finding Out.</p> <p>Usually this process doesn't involve shared experiences.</p> <p>Students choose ways to sort information.</p> <p>The students also assume responsibility for organising information.</p>	<p>The students choose ways to reflect on information and decide how they will act on the information.</p>

The Teacher's Role

The teacher is often described as a facilitator in inquiry learning. Rather than teachers telling students what they should know and do, the role they play could best be described as that of an activator. They are active in supporting, scaffolding and intervening in timely ways to guide students as they do the inquiring and act on their questions and findings. The teacher may need to provide specific teaching sessions to explicitly teach skills to students so that they are able to meet the requirements of each stage.

Table 2 lists some of the important roles of teachers and examples of possible classroom actions as they help students work through the stages of inquiry and activate their own learning.

TABLE 2: Roles of the teacher and classroom actions for each inquiry phase

Note: The Going Further stage is highlighted in grey, as it is not relevant to all inquiries, especially personal, negotiated inquiries.

Phase and Teacher Roles	Examples of Possible Classroom Actions
Tuning In	
Choose tasks and questions to engage, elicit curiosity and spark motivation.	Involve students in hands-on tasks where possible. (See Chapter 6 for activity ideas.)
Help students to link their prior knowledge to new information. Identify gaps in the students' knowledge.	Use and build on students' current knowledge. Use questions and prior knowledge to decide on appropriate ways to find out more. Record this information in a systematic way to assist with monitoring student progress and to inform further planning.
Help students to define the key issue and problem and/or to formulate questions and justify the choice of inquiry focus.	Model ways of thinking about issues and problems from a variety of perspectives, determining what is important for further inquiry. Use a graphic organiser to map out the issues and relationships between them. Discuss and then jointly construct a variety of questions related to the inquiry. Provide students with time to form their own questions.
Help students to set personal goals.	Discuss or provide a list of personal goals. Demonstrate how to break a goal into small, achievable steps.
Provide guidance when students are planning how to seek information about their questions or the inquiry focus.	Jointly construct class charts that list possible sources of information or prompts that help them to implement appropriate steps in the inquiry process.
Finding Out	
Help students to select appropriate sources of information and locate key ideas and patterns.	Discuss the types of sources (primary, secondary) to be used and some possibilities for each type. Model how to use search engines, library resources and book formats. Use data charts or other graphic organisers to help students record relevant, key information and to identify and make generalisations.
Keep students focused on information that is relevant to their question, problem or issue.	Model how to determine the importance of information. This is especially useful when students are taking notes, summarising or synthesising. Regularly remind students to refer to their initial inquiry focus and questions and to check their progress and actions against them.
Ensure students' viewpoints are challenged and broadened.	Pose questions that require students to justify their opinions and viewpoints. Ask questions that might help students to think about an issue in a different way.
Assist with design of methods, such as interviews or surveys.	During reading activities, help students to deconstruct texts (such as interviews or surveys) and identify their purpose, structures and features. Through writing activities, help the students to apply their knowledge of the purpose, structures and features of the deconstructed texts.

Getting going	
Help students to select ways to organise and represent data. They might need help to interpret, classify, analyse, summarise, synthesise, draw conclusions and evaluate information.	<p>Demonstrate how to use a range of graphic organisers and other techniques to organise information. ICT could be used.</p> <p>Discuss and model ways of presenting information in print, oral, visual and multimedia formats.</p>
Identify any gaps in the students' information or contradictions in their understandings.	<p>Have students present their ideas for others on a feedback panel. Students pose questions to their peers.</p> <p>Plan ways of addressing the gaps or contradictions through whole class or group teaching and learning experiences.</p>
Help students to clarify connections and suggest other ways to check or extend the range of data and information found.	Have students present their ideas to others on a feedback panel. Students pose questions to their peers.
Going further (if applicable)	
Help students to identify questions they have answered and new questions and areas of interest.	<p>Ask students what they are still wondering about. (See Chapter 3 for examples of questions that help students to focus their personal inquiries.)</p> <p>What are they interested in finding out? Why?</p> <p>What will they do with the information when they have found out?</p>
Reflection	
Help students to reflect on their prior knowledge and predictions and to identify what helped and hindered their learning and influenced their thinking.	Some of the Tuning In activities may be revisited. Knowledge and progress can then be compared.
Help students self-assess their effort and involvement in the learning process.	<p>Make sure students are familiar with the assessment criteria (they may negotiate this).</p> <p>Include opportunities for peer assessment.</p> <p>(See Chapter 4 for ideas related to self-assessment.)</p>
Help students to make connections between ideas.	<p>Demonstrate how to use concept maps, mind maps and other strategies that can make connections visible. Software such as <i>Inspirations</i> can be used.</p> <p>Model how connections can be made at personal, local and global levels.</p> <p>Provide a variety of modes and activities for students to demonstrate their connections: activities in the visual arts or written/oral texts could be effective.</p>
Action	
Help students use their reflections to set new personal learning goals.	<p>Provide time for students to revisit their reflections and to identify their strengths, achievements, the challenges they faced and areas for growth. Use thinking strategies such as PMI charts and SWOT diagrams to help with the analysis of progress.</p> <p>Discuss breaking goals into small, achievable steps and how to check when the goals have been met.</p>
Help students to identify how they can act on the information they have learnt.	Set a personal goal, share or teach a skill to others or undertake a community action.

Focus on Inquiry: A practical approach to curriculum planning
Second edition
ISBN: 978 1 74200 480 8
SCIS order number: 1405684
Full bibliographic details are available from Curriculum Corporation.

Published by Curriculum Corporation
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Carlton South Vic 3053
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Fax: (03) 9910 9800
Email: sales@curriculum.edu.au
Website: www.curriculum.edu.au

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Edited by Beverley Laing
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Printed in Australia by Hyde Park Press Pty Ltd